The

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

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Notes of the Month.

In our last issue of this magazine we called attention to the Centenary of the passing of the Trinity Act, and emphasised the significance of the event for present-day Unitarians. We would now refer our readers to the article by the Rev. W. G. Tarrant, B.A., of London, which appears in our pages this month. Not long ago an appreciation of Mr. Tarrant's book on "Unitarianism" appeared, acknowledging the excellence of his treatment of our religious history. Consequently, we are gratified that our pages contain so opportunely an article from so able a writer, and we hope that it will be widely read, and be the means of inducing many to familiarise themselves with important events in our religious development.

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It was with considerable interest that we turned to the Tercentenary issue of "The Belfast News-Letter," and particularly to that part of it which dealt with the religious progress of the past three centuries. The reference to our own denomination is by no means exhaustive, but at the same time is not unsympathetic. We give it for the benefit of our readers who may not see the original article:—"The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church dates further back than either of the two last named (Congregational and Methodist). There were men in and around Belfast who professed its principles in the early days of the seventeenth century, when the town was experiencing the effects of the revival. It was, however, in the opening decades of the past century that the denomination made most headway, through the exertions of the late Rev. Dr. Henry Montgomery. The great features of the development of that time were the discourses of that divine and the late Rev. Dr. Cooke, a Presbyterian of the old school, who was his strong opponent. The strife then engendered has practically all disappeared, and the members of both Churches dwell together in peace and toleration. The Non-Subscribing Presbyterians hold services in five churches, and do a good work educationally."

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The month of May promises to be an eventful one for several of our country churches. On the 8th the Rev. James Glynne Davies, late of Aberdare, will

be installed at Banbridge. A week later the Rev. J. D. Davies will undergo installation at Clough as successor to the late Rev. William Napier. Later in the month it is probable that our Antrim friends will signalise in a similar way the appointment of a minister to their pulpit, made vacant by the death of the Rev. W. S. Smith. We hope for these churches, and for those called to minister thereto, the greatest possible success.

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This year the Annual Sunday School Conference is to take place at Dunmurry, and we understand that the preparations are well forward to cope with the large attendance that is confidently expected. The facilities for reaching Dunmurry are so good that the expectations of our friends there ought to be fully realised on June 7th.

THE PASSING OF THE TRINITY ACT, 1813.

By Rev. W. G. Tarrant, B.A.

THE chief facts concerned with the passing of the Trinity Act, a hundred years ago, are easily grasped. The significance of the change of thought indicated by the event is matter for attentive meditating. How far the history of religion in the past century has been affected by it, and the further outlook, are things to fill a book rather than a short article. Here we deal with the simpler task.

On the accession of William and Mary, the law known as the Toleration Act was passed (1689), affording relief to Dissenters from the order and government of the Episcopal Church, provided that such Dissenters subscribed the doctrinal articles of the Church. In the years that immediately followed there arose a memorable debate concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Many books and pamphlets were published, some of them by men of learning and high ecclesiastical position; but it cannot be denied that, as the controversy proceeded, the difficulties involved in this doctrine became only the more evident, and no dexterity appeared equal to the problem of reasoning upon them without falling into heretical positions of one form or another. All this naturally led to increasing boldness in the attack and deepening anxiety in the defence. Ultimately, in the ninth and tenth years of the reign, the so-called Blasphemy Act was distinctly aimed at the attacking party. Anti-trinitarians had been excluded from the relief granted by the Toleration Act; now they were threatened with severe penalties if they impugned the doctrine in question. Beginning with civil disabilities for a first offence, no less a penalty than three years' imprisonment was the possible sequel to its repetition.

The supporters of this legislation included many Dissenters, as well as the general body of Churchmen. In spite of it, the questioning spirit spread in the ranks of both, though it was chiefly manifested in the Church. Forbidden by the law to adopt an openly Anti-trinitarian position, those to whom the orthodox doctrine was impossible adopted various interpretations of its official expressions, contriving as well as they could to keep within the four corners of the creed. As is well known, some of their devices were but a thin disguise for heresy of a pronounced type. Outside the Church the tendency to Non-subscription made progress in the opening decades of the 18th century, and thus the atmosphere of thought freshened in several ways, while in the minds of thoughtful and cultured men, here and on the Continent, there arose more and more repugnance to mental and spiritual bondage. But institutions and hierarchies, once firmly set, are hard to move, and in spite of the growing liberality of the times, it was not till 1779 that a fresh measure of relief was granted by British law. This Act permitted the substitution of a declaration of adherence to the Christian religion and the Scriptures for subscription to the doctrinal portion of the Thirty-nine Articles.

But the laws against impugners of the Trinity remained—not, indeed, actively employed, but ready for use in case of need. Beside the case of Elwall, who was indicted in 1726 for an

offence of this kind (the indictment being scouted by judge and jury), a case occurred only a few years before the repeal of these laws, when a minister was proceeded against at the Cambridge Assizes by some orthodox Dissenters with another minister at their head. This indictment also was futile, but it illustrated a serious annoyance which might but too easily become the gravest of dangers.

In the spring of 1792 that enlightened and gifted man, Charles James Fox, brought forward a Bill to repeal these laws, presenting a petition signed by Christians of different denominations. Unfortunately, the heated state of public opinion, consequent on the developments of the French Revolution, rendered the time unpropitious—(the Priestley riots occurred the year before). Pitt and Burke spoke vehemently against the proposal, which was defeated by a very large majority. Twenty years still must elapse before such a proposal could pass, but when it did it was with unanimity.

The committee of the Dissenters' Deputies, discerning at last that a better day had dawned, found in Mr. William Smith, M.P. for Norwich, a man well fitted to carry the movement to a victorious issue in 1813. Respecting this gentleman, amongst whose descendants many names eminent in our circle are to be found, including Florence Nightingale, some interesting particulars have been preserved. Originating from an Isle of Wight family, his father settled at Clapham, near London, and William, who also resided there, was associated in friendship and public spirit, though not in evangelical doctrine, with the celebrated "Clapham Sect"—including Wilberforce, Clarkson, Thornton, etc.—whose philanthropies have rendered them famous. He was a student at Daventry Academy, where Joseph Priestley preceded him, and imbibed a rich classical learning, to which he added good taste in literature and the fine arts. Entering Parliament in 1784, when he was twenty-eight, he very soon acquired a high reputation as a fearless champion of civil and religious liberty, and his temper may be judged from the words used by him when supporting Fox's motion in 1792, in face of all the obloquy of the moment: "As long as my name is William I will stand up for my principles." In a satire of the period he is thus referred to:—

"At length, when the candles burn low in thei sockets,
Up gets William Smith, with both hands in his pockets,
On a course of morality fearlessly enters,
With all the opinions of all the Dissenters."

The last line indicates that as Chairman of the Deputies he did not allow his Unitarian sympathies to narrow his outlook when general Dissenting interests were involved.

As originally introduced, the Trinity Bill of 1813 was drawn in very sweeping terms, and proposed to repeal not only the particular enactments in question, but "so much of all or any other Act or Acts of the English, Scottish, British, Irish, or United Parliaments as imposes penalties on those who interpreted the Holy Scriptures inconsistently with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity." These words were accepted by the Commons, but the Law Lords pointed out that technically no Act can be regularly repealed without being specified. Happily, there was no disposition to kill the Bill, and in a very few days a new draught was brought in and passed through all the forms in both Houses in time to secure the Royal Assent before prorogation.

The Act, which thus dates from July 21, 1813, removed the exemption of Unitarians from the benefits of the Toleration Act, and repealed the Blasphemy Act (9 and 10, William), so far as relates to persons denying the Trinity. In addition, the Scottish Blasphemy Acts, which actually prescribed the death penalty, were also repealed.

As has been stated above, the repeal was agreed upon by all parties; thus there was no occasion for the exertions of the influential supporters, including Sir Benjamin Hobhouse, Mr. Whitehead, Lords Holland and Lauderdale, who had promised their help. The good will of the spiritual Peers was apparent from the first, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop

of Chester, while naturally severing themselves from the opinions of Unitarians, spoke heartily for the Bill, declaring that it was not the temper of the Church to be intolerant. On Sunday, July 25, the Rev. Thos. Belsham, preaching at Essex Chapel, warmly acknowledged the attitude of the bishops on this ocasion. "When," he eloquently asks, "since the glorious era of the Reformation, did any Bench of Bishops before exist who would have concurred with such liberal and meritorious unanimity in suffering a measure of this kind to pass without opposition? And with what peculiar propriety and grace did some of these venerable dignitaries come forward to express their approbation of the principle of the Bill!"

These agreeable feelings were expressed on the morrow of the passing of the Act. But, alas! when in March of 1814, Belsham had the duty of preaching before the Unitarian Society in commemoration of the repeal, he had to notice a regrettable exception to the unanimity of Parliament. Dr. Thomas Burgess, Bishop of St. Davids, (a see which his predecessor, Dr. Horsley, was said to have attained as a reward for his share in controversy with Dr. Priestley), whether influenced or not by the traditions of the bishopric, published his reasons for dissenting from the repeal, explaining that urgent local duties had kept him from London when the Act was so hurriedly passed. He singularly enough began his pamphlet by asserting that "the protection of religious truth required neither fire nor faggot, imprisonment nor fine, for any error in religion," yet on the next page, oblivious of what the penalties under the old law were, he says: "I conclude that the repeal ought not to have taken place, and that the old law ought to be restored"! In this remarkable confusion we may as well leave the good Bishop's belated protest. For the next six years or so he carried on a vigorous campaign against the Unitarians, in which he seems to have got as good as he gave. Then, upon the discovery of John Milton's long-hidden manuscript on "Christian Doctrine," wherein the writer's heresies are palpable, Bishop Burgess argued the work couldn't be Milton's, because it was unorthodox. Well! By the way, we may add that protests, like poverty, may bring strange company together. William Cobbett appears to have been the only other notable opponent of the repeal. Someone thinks he must have been ironical.

It is pleasanter to return to the man whose name, as was gratefully said at the time, will ever be associated with this memorable Act. In James Stephen's essay on the "Clapham Sect" occur these sentences, with which we may close:—William Smith "lived as if to show how much of the coarser duties of this busy world may be undertaken by a man of quick sensibility without impairing the finer sense of the beautiful in nature and in art; and as if to prove how much a man of ardent benevolence may enjoy of this world's happiness without any steeling of the heart to the want and the calamities of others. When he had nearly completed fourscore years, he could still gratefully acknowledge that he had no remembrance of any bodily pain or illness, and that of the very numerous family of which he was the head, every member still lived to support and to gladden his old age. And yet, if he had gone mourning all his days, he could scarcely have acquired a more tender pity for the miserable, or have laboured more habitually for their relief." He died May 31, 1835.

PIONEERS OF LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY.

By Rev. G. L. Phelps.

IV. John Hamilton Thom. (1808-1894).

BORN at Newry, educated at Belfast, prepared for the ministry by the Bruces, of the First Congregation, Belfast, and Dr. Montgomery, John Hamilton Thom's life and teaching should have a special interest for our readers. When but 21 years of age he was appointed minister of the Ancient Chapel of Toxteth, Liverpool,

and two years later became minister of the larger and more important Renshaw Street Chapel, in the same town. Here he remained, with a break of three years, until his retirement in 1867.

The theological atmosphere which he breathed in his Irish home was heavily charged with Arianism, while the English Unitarianism with which he early came into contact was entirely under the influence of Joseph Priestley. Both types of religious thought have since become extinct, and Mr. Thom was among the first to lead the way towards a more rational and a more spiritual faith, though he never completely freed himself from Arian influences. It was Dr. Channing from whom light first came, and Mr. Thom gratefully acknowledged the debt. "I remember a sense of being new-born; others had taught me much—no one before had unsealed the fountain in myself. He was the first to touch the spring of living water, which made me independent even of himself. I speak of myself as among the first on this side of the ocean to receive the impact of his mind, only to illustrate what he was to so many; the opener of a new religious life, not as the founder of a school, but as the destroyer of all schools except the school of the Spirit." Mr. Thom's phraseology is often old-fashioned, his Christology in some respects nearer to orthodoxy than most of us find ourselves; but he thoroughly appreciated the value of spiritual liberty. "Spiritual liberty manifestly requires some immediate fellowship with God. Nothing else could protect us from man's authority, and give us self-subsistence. If we cannot appeal to a higher witness, how are we to stand against the witness of men speaking in the name of traditions and of the wisdom of the past? To this end we must have absolute reliance on the teaching of God in us. God is a Spirit, and we are spirits; and to the spirit he makes himself known. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. These are the elements of religious life."

In the application of this principle Mr. Thom arrived at truths which are destined, I believe, to ultimately find universal acceptance. On some matters of purely historical and theological importance his position has long been given up by most of those who belong to the denomination to which he belonged, but these do not constitute the essentials of faith. For example, he accepted all the miracles, he accepted as genuine sayings of Jesus, and as consequently authoritative, all the sayings attributed to him in the four gospels. We view the miracles differently now, and biblical criticism has compelled us to place the fourth gospel on a different footing from the other three, but beneath the forms of expression which we seem to have outgrown there are evidences of wonderful insight into the things of the Spirit. Take, for example, his teaching with regard to Jesus; though we may not all care to use exactly his phraseology, yet the inner meaning is that which we must accept. "Christ is the great quickener of faith, because it possessed himself entirely. His life is the pattern of a life of faith. The Christian means of strengthening faith is to see its power in our Lord. Only, remember that when we are drawn towards Christ, it is still the attraction of God that we obey. It is our Father's Spirit that we recognise in his truer Son. We are drawn towards its fulness, because in a measure it is living and moving in us also. We are not mere students of the inspiration of another, but sharers in it. We ought not to be mere imitative followers of his manner of life, but more and more fed from the same fountain, growing from the same roots. We must have the living God in ourselves. Christ is our mediator, to show us the Father, to draw us personally into his own relations with God, that our souls may feel the eternal Spirit with none between. He would be no mediator if he arrested us with himself, and kept us back from God. Sons of God, we must have personal communion with our Father, else we are exiles from His presence, and know Him only by report." And again—"We are saved by Christ when he stirs the kindred life in ourselves, when we

are ruled by God's Spirit as he was, and have faith in God's inspirations as he had. God Himself is the living spring of our goodness, and true discipleship consists in a like fidelity to our own inspirations, that we should not be outward copyists, but men full of inward love, faith, and courage."

Dr. Martineau was, I think, quite right when he said: "The sermons combined in Mr. Thom's Corinthians can hardly fail to make the reader a better and more spiritual Christian: I am not so sure of their making him a better Pauline interpreter." So in all Mr. Thom's works we are apt to be conscious of a critical and theological advance which has overtaken him; but whosoever can be wisely tolerant of these intellectual differences is rewarded by spiritual uplift. He was in touch with the Infinite and possessed wisdom from above. His own words on spiritual heroes and prophets best help to describe and explain himself:—"Those to whom the suggestions of God in them come with the power of realities, who have the same faith in their inspirations that other men have in their perceptions, to whom the voice of their conscience is the whisper of the Holy Spirit, and an aspiration after good, a blessing promised of God, which man has but to stretch forth his hand and reach, working and waiting in faith—these are the spiritual heroes, the prophets and saviours of the world. They speak out, and act out, and live in, the testimonies from God which they find within their souls. They believe that man is the child of God, and that the Father is in communication with His children."

It is impossible in the space at my disposal to do justice to the spiritual insight of John Hamilton Thom, who was in very truth a faithful steward of the mysteries of God. He was not a theologian advocating a system, and cared little for theological controversy. His attitude of mind is indicated by the titles of his published volumes of sermons: "The Laws of Life after the mind of Christ" and "A Spiritual Faith."

He sought to be at once loyal to the truth and free from sectarian bitterness, and we should do well to take to heart these words of his: "You are DISSENTERS, not because you have the truth, but because you have, and shall ever have, freedom to find it; that in the faith of progress you may worship the God who gives you light. You are UNITARIANS, because you are not, and will not be, Sectarians; because you see clearly that the folds whose fences are speculative orthodoxies must always exclude some portion of the flock of Christ; and that the principle of the Church Universal, as laid down in the Saviour's prayer—that all men should be one with the Father, even as he was—is simply the recognition of the Image of God in human nature."

THE ULSTER UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

Visit of Dr. Tudor Jones.

An Impression and Suggestion by the Rev. J. Worthington, B.A.

THE special preacher at the Annual Services of the Association this year on April 13th was the Rev. Dr. Tudor Jones. Dr. Jones is a Unitarian minister in London who is rapidly making a reputation as an interpreter of the philosophy of Rudolf Eucken. Eucken's philosophy is popular just now (philosophies, like fashions, have their days of popularity), and the Committee of the Association felt that a student and disciple of Eucken, as Dr. Jones is known to be, might possibly prove an attraction both to the members of our own congregations and the general public. The Committee's anticipations were in a large degree realised. The present writer had not the privilege of attending the services in the First Church, but he understands they were appreciated, the attendances were good, and the collections, a point to which the Committee naturally attaches some importance, were above the average. On the following evening the annual meeting of the Association was held in the Central Hall.

There was again a good attendance. The first item of business was the Committee's report. This was read by the Rev. G. J. Slipper. The report, first of all, called attention to the number of Committee meetings held during the year, and the attendances of the members. The reading of this part of the report must have made some of the members of the Committee blush, for we were informed they had not attended a single meeting. One gentleman present suggested that none of these members should be re-elected to the new Committee (a wise suggestion, as it seemed to us), but the meeting preferred, apparently, to give them all an opportunity of redeeming themselves, for they were all re-elected. The report went on to speak of the free distribution and sale of Unitarian literature at the Depository, under the capable management of Mr. Gordon, and one felt that if this were all the Association was able to do, it would be doing a good, useful work. But the report suggested that the Committee believed they were able to do a greater and more important work if they had the means at their disposal. They believed they could take steps to form Unitarian congregations in towns where none at present exist, if their financial resources allowed. "More missionary work," the report said, "should be undertaken by the Committee in towns and at seaside resorts where no Unitarian congregations exist," but "the Committee regret that the finances of the Association are not sufficiently large to enable them to take the full responsibility of this work." What stands in the way, then, of this important work is the scantiness of the Association's financial resources. We refuse to believe that this difficulty would be allowed to remain if the fact were brought prominently before the laymen of the Church. A Church which is not a missionary Church, which does not seek to extend its influence, which fails to build up new congregations in populous centres, can hardly be called a living Church, and at present we are open to this reproach, according to the Committee's report, simply because the financial resources of the Association are inadequate. For our own part we believe the money will be forthcoming when the Committee of the Association makes up its mind to engage in the kind of missionary work alluded to.

An opportunity was given to Dr. Jones to address the meeting by the passing of a resolution thanking him for his services of the previous day, and offering him a welcome on behalf of the Association. Dr. Jones gave an interesting address. He spoke of the importance of the religious training of the young, especially during the period of adolescence. He said there was a tendency in matters of religion and theology to-day to move along the line of least resistance. Religion did not grip either young or old to-day as strongly as it did a generation ago, the principal reason being that to-day we gave less thought to religion. This is all very good so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough, and it was a little disappointing that Dr. Jones did not suggest the lines on which we are to do our thinking. Present-day indifference is due, not so much to want of thought on matters of religion, as to the state of confusion in which most men find themselves the moment they begin to think. The remedy for this no doubt lies in more thorough thinking. But then we may reasonably ask from the public platform to-day some guidance and assistance in our thinking. Our great need to-day is doctrinal restatement and development. Dr. Jones, indeed, said as much, as also did the Rev. G. L. Phelps, who proposed, in an able speech, the resolution affirming the adhesion of the meeting to the principles of the Association. But it is not enough to point out the need. We are all conscious of it. What we want is the restatement, the constructive effort itself, guidance in our thinking about the doctrine of Election, Revelation, Inspiration, the Future Life, and the Divinity of Christ. All these doctrines and others are obviously in need of restatement and development. This is not a fact which requires emphasis. What is wanted is the re-statement itself, and the annual meeting of a Unitarian Association is precisely the

meeting at which such a re-statement should be attempted. We venture, therefore, to make a suggestion. We suggest that the programme of the proceedings at the annual meeting be radically changed. The purely business part of the meeting—the reading of the report and the statement of accounts—could be disposed of within fifteen minutes. The remainder of the evening could then be given up to two or three selected speakers on selected topics, speakers and topics being chosen some time beforehand, the special preacher for the annual services being one of the speakers. The present method of selecting speakers on the evening of the meeting is unfair to the speakers themselves, and it is an undue strain upon the loyalty of intelligent men to be required to sit for nearly two hours listening to speakers, none of whom have given five minutes preparation to their addresses.

BALLYMONEY.

ORDINATION OF REV. FELIX HOLT, B.A.

THE Rev. Felix Holt, B.A., was ordained at the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church at Ballymoney, on Wednesday, 16th April. The first part of the service (which began at 12-15 p.m.) was conducted by the Rev. S. E. Bowen, of Crumlin. His Scripture lesson was II. Cor., iv., and his text Luke xv. 17, 18. He began his sermon by remarking that those words of the re-awakening of the prodigal denoted an advanced stage in the religious side of human development, when one carried back the imagination to the generations of men who had lived in the state comparable to that of the brutes, the demands of whose animal nature were fulfilled by mere living. One knew there were limits to the longings of a creature conscious of mere animal existence, but who could say whether there were any limits to the yearnings of the spirit in the rational man. The animal failing to answer the least demands of its animal nature dies; by such failing the whole of an animal species might become extinct. But the human being, failing to fulfil the demands of its spiritual nature, did not die, unless the loss of spiritual nature and degradation to the consciousness of mere animal life were a kind of death. That would be our state if, after probing our characters, we felt no need of returning to our Father and our God. But if we had not played false to the higher nature, we might feel assured that we could rise up with the prodigal and attain to a better understanding—that we might go to our Father and walk in the direction of the light..

To the Rev. Alfred Turner, of Templepatrick, had been allotted the duty of expounding and defending the Presbyterian order of Church government, and to put the prescribed questions to the candidate for ordination. Mr. Holt then made his statement of principles and objects in devoting himself to the duties of the Christian ministry, saying that he considered that the first duty of the minister was to lead the worship of the people committed to his charge, to help them to do what they might all do as ministers to one another, namely, to witness to the common feeling of religion, so as to confirm each one of his fellow-members in his faith by assuring him that what he felt was not a matter of exceptional or peculiar self-delusion. But if Mr. Holt placed that as the first and foremost duty of the minister, he showed, by describing them in noble terms, that he fully realized the importance of his other duties as pertaining to the twofold office of preacher and pastor.

It was Mr. Robert D. Pinkerton, J.P., who, answering for the congregation, replied in the affirmative to the question whether the call given to the minister was adhered to, whereupon the act of ordination was performed, the prayer being offered by Rev. Eustace Thompson, of Cairncastle.

After that the charge to the new minister was delivered by Rev. J. A. Miskimmin, of Glenarm, and the charge to the congregation by Rev. W. G. Marsden, of Ballycarry. After the service the majority of those who had

been present adjourned for lunch at the Railway Café, and were joined by a few invited guests, including two ministers of neighbouring Presbyterian congregations. There was not so much speechmaking as is customary on such occasions, but the health of the new minister was kindly proposed by Dr. Boyd, Mr. Holt replying in a speech that began with wit and ended in wisdom—or at all events went on in that trend—when several of the company, including the writer of the present report, were suddenly and unceremoniously called off by their puffing and impatient locomotive.

SCENES, INCIDENTS, AND LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS.

IX. The man sick of the palsy. Read Mark 2, 1-12. *Memory verse,* Mark 2. 10.

Purpose of Lesson. — The healing power of sympathy.

1. *The simple, devout faith of the man and his friends.* Nothing would daunt them. Faith means more than believing : it means doing. We must do our best for God to do his. See the story of Jupiter and the waggoner, whose cart had got stuck in a rut. The man prayed for his God to lift it out. Jupiter replied : " Put your shoulder to the wheel." We must believe in God, because that will help us to do more. St. Paul taught that those who really believed in Jesus would try to live like Jesus.

2. *Sickness not a punishment for wickedness,* as the Jews believed. This belief kept them from helping the sick sympathetically.

3. *Jesus' sympathy.* " Thy sins are forgiven thee," by which he meant " God loves you, and does not wish to see you sick."

4. *The son of man hath power to forgive sins.* This means that Jesus forgave sins, and therefore that all men should be forgiving. Forgiveness is the first step to sympathy, and sympathy to healing. Sin is bad enough in itself without our making it worse.

X. Jesus' teaching on forgiveness. Read Matt. 18. 21-22 ; Luke 15. 11-32. *Memory verse,* Matt. 5. 44.

Purpose of Lesson, We can only be God's children by loving each other.

1. *It is easy to love our friends,* for we seem to understand them ; but those we do not understand, who seem hateful, it is hard to love. But they are all God's children—members of one family—and therefore for the sake of family peace we must forgive.

2. *Forgiveness means allowing for differences.* Some are white, some black, some wise, some foolish, some brave, some weak, some tender, some harsh, some can do one thing well, some another ; some have different habits and ways from others. We have to allow for these differences, and then we become mutually helpful. All quarrels and wars arise from want of forgiveness.

3. *Seventy times seven.* This means we must never cease. See story of Prodigal Son ; also King David and Absalom.

4. *We all need forgiveness,* both from God and man. We must forgive that we may be forgiven. " Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us."

XI. Jesus' broad human sympathy. Read Mark 2. 15-22. *Memory verse,* Mark 2. 17.

Purpose of Lesson.—The good man will find goodness and happiness everywhere.

1. *Calling sinners.* Jesus did not love sin, as do many people who mix with sinners. He loved goodness, and looked for it everywhere. The Pharisees thought themselves perfectly good (a great mistake), and therefore would not let Jesus teach them. He taught those who, like us, try to be good, but find it hard. Moreover, oftentimes those who seem worst may become best. See story of ugly duckling, which became beautiful swan. Sympathy helps all to be better.

2. *Fasting.* Religion does not make us miserable. Jesus' disciples were too happy to mourn, because they had Jesus with them. If his spirit is with us, we also shall be happy. Yet we ought to give up many things, but to make others happy, not ourselves miserable. Parents, friends, etc., are

always gladly giving up for us. Read St. Paul 2. Corinthians 6. 4-10.

3. *New wine and old bottles.* This means do not do things half-heartedly: be thorough. Many children and grown-ups are willing to be generous, so long as no great sacrifice is required of them. Half-heartedness is like jerry-building: we must build our house on the rock, not on the sand.

XII. The Sabbath. Read Mark 2. 23; 3. 6. *Memory verse,* Mark 3. 4.

Purpose of Lesson. The Sabbath is good only when used for good.

1. *The Jews very strict about Sabbath.* (The seventh day—our Saturday). No kinds of work, not even good work. For example, no corn can be thrashed, but even rubbing in the hands was called thrashing, hence the disciples' offence. Again, no doctoring could be done on Sabbath. There was, however, something most noble about the Jews' devotion to it. *e.g.,* in 168 B.C., 1,000 Jews let themselves be put to death by the Syrian soldiers rather than draw sword on the Sabbath; and in 63 B.C., Pompey, the Roman general, when besieging Jerusalem, was allowed to advance his siege-works uninterrupted on that day. (Read Carpenter's "Life in Palestine," pp. 113 *ff.*)

2. *Jesus was not opposed to the beautiful Sabbath idea, but to its narrowness.* His disciples were hungry and homeless. Hence they had as much right to pluck and eat corn (which was not stealing) as the Pharisees had to their rich dinners already prepared at home. Also, Jesus would heal on the Sabbath, because his work was to do good, and oftentimes the healing was urgently needed.

3. *The lesson is, that the day of rest means rest from selfish cares,* not from good and necessary work. Just because it is a day of rest, we can often do more good on that day. We go to church and school to be helped by God, and if we see a chance to help anyone we should seize on it. We ought, if possible, to make every day a Sabbath by making every day good. The purpose of good things is to do good with them. The Jews were very like that little girl who proudly kept her Bible clean and new by never using it.

Reports.

Unity Guild.—The March meeting was held on the 19th of that month in Mountpottinger school-room, when Mr. W. J. Baxter, B.A. (Dromore), read a a paper on "Charles Lamb." The reader, who seemed to be thoroughly at home with his subject, remarked that he considered Lamb the most lovable character in English literature. A feature of his work was the great love shown for his native city of London, and in his correspondence was revealed the pathos of his life. It was pointed out that his biographer hardly did justice to his Unitarian opinions, which, as a great admirer of Dr. Priestley, he retained throughout life. Many delightful passages from his writings were read to an appreciative audience. The annual meeting of the Guild was held in Rosemary Hall on April 9th. After the report and financial statement had been given and approved, Mr. A. M'I. Cleland was unanimously elected President for Session 1913-14, whilst Messrs. E. R. Jackson and Geo. J. Hill were re-elected to the positions of Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. A strong Committee was also appointed. It was decided to have only two excursions this summer, the dates and suggested venues being Dromore (Co. Down), on May 24th, and Dundrum, in September. It was decided to hold the Annual Service on Sunday, May 25th, in York Street Church.

Banbridge: Dunbar Memorial Schools.—The annual distribution of prizes to the pupils of the above school took place on Wednesday evening, March 19th, in the school-room, in the presence of a very large gathering of parents, pupils and friends. Mr. R. W. Glass, LL.B., presided, and the prizes were distributed to the scholars by Mrs. A. M'Cammon. The annual report, which was read by the Principal, Mr. Hutton, showed that the school has had a very successful year. An examination of the school had been conducted by Mr. Honan, the Inspector of National Schools, and he reported as follows:—"General condition of school excellent; the school is conducted in a highly efficient manner.

The instruction is active, intelligent, and the proficiency of the pupils indicates very good progress; the rooms are neatly kept, and the pupils are receiving an excellent training in habits of neatness, order, and industry."

A competitive examination in hygiene and temperance was held last April by the Irish Temperance League. Thirty-two out of the thirty-six competitors were successful in gaining prizes, one pupil gaining a gold medal and four others gaining silver medals. The general attendance during the year had been excellent, and one pupil had not missed a single day for five years. Special reference was made by the Principal to the great interest taken in the school by Mr. John Smyth, M.A., who was unable to be present that evening, and by his son, Mr. Haughton Smyth, the manager of the school, and he expressed the sincere sympathy of those present with them in their recent sad bereavement. Mrs. M'Cammon having gracefully distributed the prizes, the Chairman presented Mr. Hutton with a handsome dressing case, the gift of the teaching-staff and pupils of the school. Mr. Hutton, in acknowledging the gift, warmly thanked both the teachers and the pupils for their kindness and appreciation. He assured them of his constant interest in them. He thanked the members of the teaching-staff, Misses Frazer, Jordan, and Smyth, for their loyal co-operation, and said that much of the success of the school was due to the intelligent interest they took in their work. An excellent programme of music, including several action-songs, was given by the pupils during the evening. They displayed fine quality of voice and very careful training. At the conclusion of the proceedings a hearty vote of thanks was, on the motion of the Rev. Glynne Davies, seconded by Mr. J. Murphy, J.P., accorded to Mrs. M'Cammon for distributing the prizes, and to the children who had taken part in the entertainment. Mr. Glass proved a very efficient Chairman during the evening. A very pleasant and successful meeting was brought to a close by the singing of the National Anthem.

Belfast: Domestic Mission.—A thoroughly enjoyable social evening was held here on Friday, March 28th. The programme was almost entirely contributed by members of the Mission Church; one item which caused great amusement was a burlesque thought-reading entertainment by Mr. John Wilson and Mr. Allan Hayes; a sketch, given by the Misses Alexander and Wood, was also highly appreciated. During the evening a statement of moneys received by the Poor's Purse was read by Mr. Rea, who appealed for further support from the congregation. The contributions, which are largely given by the members of the Mission, amount to £9 15s. 4d. for last year. Rev. F. Woolley, the Missionary, in a short speech, explained how this money had been spent, and emphasised the fact that it had all gone to deserving people directly connected with their church, and that none of it had been disbursed in casual charity.

Cairncastle.—The Annual General Congregational Meeting of the Old Meeting-house was held in the school-room on Friday evening, 21st February. The introduction of the "New Hymnal" was discussed. It was decided to adopt it. After the business had been disposed of, there were songs, games, etc., followed by a dance, which was kept up until midnight.

Downpatrick.—The Downpatrick First Presbyterian Children's Fête took place on Wednesday evening in the Minor Hall. It was thought by the teachers that the children's voices would be heard better in the small compass of this hall, but it proved very cramped for the audience, who, however, seemed thoroughly to enjoy the several items, notably the "Doll's Election" and "The Flower Song," in which so many tiny tots took part. The trios by Jim and Joe Hogg and Bob Quinn were given mellifluously, and in the "Singing Lesson" the solo parts by Miss Lily Bell, the possessor of a sweet voice and clearness of enunciation, were faultless. In the duologue, "Geese," by Misses Dolly and Laura Cochrane, in costume, the characterisation was well sustained. The symphony, violin and piano, was gracefully and tunefully executed and warmly

received. Subjoined is the programme :—

Hymn, "Carry the standard bravely," Scholars ; song, "The Flag of Empire," Scholars ; violin and piano, symphony, Misses Laura and Dolly Cochrane ; song, "The Sea is England's Glory," James and Joe Hogg and R. Quinn ; the bells, eight Scholars ; action song, "The Carrier's Cart," Scholars ; "The Singing Lesson," Girls ; song, "Our National Defenders," R. Quinn, James and Joe Hogg ; action song, "The Wind Mill," Scholars ; the bells, "Annie Laurie," eight Scholars ; trialogue, "The Doll's Election," Mabel Dickson, Annie Dickson, and Jeannie Quinn ; song, "Robinson Crusoe," James and Joe Hogg and R. Quinn ; song, "The Song of the Flowers," Girls ; duologue, "Geese," Misses L. and D. Cochrane ; bells, "The Land o' the Leal," eight Scholars ; song, "A Life on the Ocean Wave," R. Quinn, James and Joe Hogg.

Mr. S. C. N. Lowry and Mr. Hugh Dickson jointly deserve thanks for a pleasant surprise to the children of bags of sweets and fruit. Books were presented to the following children by Mr. S. C. N. Lowry. Hollymount scholars will receive books later :

Lily Bell, Molly Bell, Mabel Dickson, Kathleen Dickson, Annie Dickson, May Dickson, Reta Cochrane, Norman Cochrane, May Quinn, Jeannie Quinn, Robert Quinn, Jessie M'Cullough, Evelyn M'Cullough, Jessie Keown, John Keown, James Hogg, Joseph Hogg, Lucy Neill, Ransome Neill, James S. Shaw, Helen Milligan, Willie Patterson, Jack Patterson, Annie Espie, Katie Espie, Eliza Espie, Mary Jane Espie, John Cochrane, Lizzie Hayes, Norah Patterson, Nan Russell, Hugh Henry Hayes, William James Espie, Willie Neill, James Hayes, Agnes Kelly, Sarah Anne Hayes, Gertie Kelly, Jack Dickson, Christina Shaw, Robert Shaw, Elizabeth Neill.

Mr. Lowry proposed, and Mr. Hugh Dickson seconded, a vote of thanks to Mrs. Dunbar for her painstaking and self-sacrificing efforts in training the children during the winter, the number enrolled in the two schools being 73. The thanks of the congregation were also expressed to the teachers, who, Sunday after Sunday, give their services so ungrudgingly. The National Anthem brought a pleasant evening to an end.

Larne and Kilwaughter.—The Annual Business Meeting of this congregation was held on the evening of Good Friday last, in the school-room, when a fairly good number of members attended. At 7-30 p.m., after praise and prayer, Miss I. M'Ninch presiding at the piano, an excellent tea was tastefully served. Subsequently the chair was taken by Rev. J. Kennedy, who called upon the hon. secretary, Mr. S. Magill, to submit the report of the General Purposes Committee, which, after referring to certain sad occurrences, mentioned the work done by the Sewing Guild and Music Committee, the erection of an annexe to the school building, and the addition of seven new names to the roll of membership. Mr. D. A. Nelson, treasurer, submitted a statement of accounts, which was very satisfactory, showing, as it did, a comfortable balance on hand wherewith to commence the new financial year. These reports were ordered to be printed and circulated as usual, with report of the meeting. The General Purposes Committee, containing for the first time the names of three ladies, the Music and Guild Committees, having been appointed, Mr. S. Magill, Chairman of the Larne Urban Council, took charge of the meeting, and introduced the items of a short but well-chosen musical programme. The vocalists were—Miss Mollie Austin, now a successful professional singer and teacher of music, and Miss Mary Campbell, the instrumentalists being Miss Janie Campbell, Miss M'Keown, Miss Annie M'Ninch, Mr. Norman Canning, Mr. W. Mundell, and Mr. W. H. Eslar. Mr. Holmes, organist of the church, played in his true artistic style the accompaniments on the piano. On the motion of Mr. D. A. Nelson, votes of thanks were heartily passed to the tea-makers, the Misses Bailie, Miss Isa M'Ninch, Miss M. Fleming, Miss B. M'Ninch and Miss M'Kee, and their stewards, and to those who gave their services in the musical department. An exceedingly pleasant evening was concluded with hymn and benediction.

Mountpottinger.—The Mountpottinger congregation has suffered a serious loss through the death of two loyal and faithful members—Mr. James Barry and Mr. Hugh Lamont Orr. Mr. Barry died on April 8th, and Mr. Orr on April 14th. Mr. Barry had been in failing health for some little time, but Mr. Orr's death came as a shock to all his friends. The minister (Rev. J. Worthington) made suitable references from the pulpit to both of the deceased. On Sunday, April 13th, speaking of Mr. Barry at the close of the sermon, he said they had to mourn that day the loss of an old and valued member. Mr. Barry, on account of his illness, had not worshipped with them for the last 18 months, but his interest in their work and worship had shown no sign of decline. He was a staunch Unitarian, and not ashamed to uphold an unpopular faith if he were convinced of its truth. He would be remembered amongst them for the loyalty of his friendship, his generous support of the things in which he was really interested, his conspicuous devotion to those who were nearest and dearest to him. Speaking of Mr. H. L. Orr, on Sunday, April 20th, Mr. Worthington said that none of them realised, as they were thinking a week ago of the friend who had then been taken from their earthly fellowship, they would that day be mourning the loss of another friend, held in equal respect and affection by the members of that congregation. The news of his death had come upon them with a shock, for it was not much more than a fortnight before that he had been amongst them enjoying moderately good health. What he could say that day in memory of their friend would, he felt, be totally inadequate, but he could venture to say there were none in that congregation who had not learned to respect him. He was one of the gentlest and kindest of men, with strong social sympathies and high ideals. Regular in his attendance at public worship, generous in his support of the Church, thoughtful about the welfare of their scholars, he was a friend they could ill afford to lose. His principal hobby, as all knew, was the study of natural history, and of some of its branches he had acquired considerable knowledge. The walls of their school-room were adorned with geological and botanical specimens, mounted and arranged by his hands, all of them from the least to the greatest bearing the marks of careful and conscientious workmanship, which was a characteristic of everything he did. He despised slipshod methods and indifferent work, and his reputation in business circles was that of one who could be trusted absolutely.

If they were to judge a religious faith by what it produces in character and conduct, said Mr. Worthington in concluding—and that was how, in his belief, it was to be judged—then he thought they could claim that the two friends whose loss they deplored were a witness to the worth of the religious faith they professed in that congregation. The best religion is that which produces the best men. Unitarians must be prepared to have their faith measured by this standard. He offered, on his own behalf, and on behalf of the members of the congregation, their sincere sympathy with the widows and families in their bereavement.

Newry.—The closing meeting of the Guild was held in the school-room on the evening of April 1st, when Mrs. Slipper delivered a most interesting and instructive lecture on China, illustrated by lantern views. There was a fair attendance of members and friends, and Mr. Walter Scott (President), was in the chair. In the course of the lecture Mrs. Slipper dealt with the various aspects of Chinese life, and spoke concerning the social, religious, and economic awakening which is taking place in that country. At the close of the lecture, the President proposed a very hearty vote of thanks to the lecturer for her delightful lecture, and Mr. C. Warnock, on seconding same, expressed the hope that Mrs. Slipper would consent to repeat it early in next session, when there would be a larger attendance of members and friends. Mrs. Slipper, in responding, said she had been amply repaid for any trouble which the preparation of the lecture had entailed, if she had succeeded in interesting those present,

and given some insight into the character of a wonderful and clever people. The usual thanks to the President and to Mr. A. Thompson, who ably manipulated the lantern, were proposed by the Rev. G. J. Slipper, and seconded by Mr. Rowland. The meeting was closed with the Benediction pronounced by the Minister.

Echoes.

This paragraph, taken from a recent issue of "Nature Notes and Queries," in the *Northern Whig*, will be of interest to many readers of this magazine:—"When passing through Antrim recently I was saddened to look at the empty house where your late esteemed correspondent, "W. S. S.," formerly resided. How well I remember my last visit to the Manse garden, the garden he so lovingly attended. With what interest he pointed out the nesting-boxes so cunningly arranged to tempt his feathered friends to abide with him for a season. How this one and that one was regularly inhabited, and how perhaps another, through faulty design or location, remained untenanted. Here in the pear tree was a nest built too early by a sanguine thrush, and the rains coming later had washed it out; then later another nest built close by, in which the brood were successfully reared. All this and much more. Later over the tea and toast how he gave of the lore of his well-stocked mind, and the objects of interest he showed with such pleasure to those like-minded with himself. Then the romance of his writings, dealing with such out-of-the-way incidents as the booming sound as of heavy guns heard over Lough Neagh. I am afraid the bird sanctuary is now deserted, for the rusted nail hangs from the knot that held the pear to the garden wall.' His memory will long be kept green by those who love a good man and the works of Nature."

* *

The Rev. Alexander Fraser, of St. Stephen's U.F. Church, Edinburgh, has just been throwing some striking sidelights on church life. His remarks referred more especially to Scotland, but they have their bearing on Church life elsewhere also. He dealt first with Sunday morning and the getting to Church, and the excuses of those who did not get there. Many folk thoroughly believed in the "day of rest" aspect of Sunday. Then there was the youth who breakfasted in bed and read the pink edition of the Saturday evening's paper. He had been following the game the previous day, standing in three inches of mud, but he must not get wet going to Church, because once, when he was a little boy, his mother imagined he had a tendency to asthma. Sunday rain was a wonderful thing; the speaker sometimes wished it could be analysed. It could keep a family from going to Church, but if the next day was a holiday they would be quite willing to chance it.

* *

At the vestibule of the Church, said Mr. Fraser, one came in touch with its financial side, and this led the speaker to several stories of "the elder at the plate," and also of the old-fashioned "ladle." The plush bag was a more aristocratic device, but it had its drawbacks, as at the end of the year the office-bearers might be able to hold a sale of buttons or form a little museum of curious coins dating from the time of Malcolm Canmore downwards. Pulpit distractions, caused by people coming in late, and also going out, were next dealt with, and Mr. Fraser pointed out that seatholders had their favourite corners, and a fortune awaited the man who could design a pew with six ends. An old Paisley woman once said she had gone to a kirk for six years, and nobody ever spoke a word to her except, "Sit up" and "Gie's that book."

* *

The Report of the Council of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association expresses the opinion that "It would prove eminently fitting if the year 1913, the centennial of the passing of the Trinity Act, were marked by a carefully planned and vigorous campaign to make known the principles and faith of Unitarian Christianity in every city, town, and village in the British Isles"; it would be fitting indeed. Would that it could be done!

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